

LA CROSSE PUBLIC LIBRARY

LIBRARY SERVICES PROCESS MANAGEMENT STUDY

2015



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Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction | 1 |
| General Library Information, Operations and Administration | 3 |
| Library Data and Usage | 3 |
| Library Budget and Staffing..... | 6 |
| Other areas reviewed related to improving cost effectiveness and/or services | 14 |
| Circulation Services..... | 20 |
| Departmental Comparison Information..... | 20 |
| Staffing and Circulation Comparisons | 21 |
| Patron self-checkout | 22 |
| Efficiency Improvements | 23 |
| Automation Solutions | 25 |
| Collection Management..... | 28 |
| Selection | 28 |
| Acquisitions..... | 28 |
| Cataloging | 29 |
| Processing..... | 29 |
| Efficiency Improvements | 30 |
| Interlibrary Loan | 32 |
| Closing | 36 |

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to assess La Crosse Public Library operations through a comparison with other libraries in Wisconsin similar in size to La Crosse's municipal population. The first phase of the study consisted of a budget expenditure review of the libraries in the study. The second phase included administering surveys to all the libraries for the areas of circulation, collection management, inter-library loan (ILL) and library administration. The third phase focused on studying how different library processes are managed by the libraries in the study.

While there are many functions that are common between libraries, access to physical resources remains the most identified and used service offered by libraries. As part of this study the processes related to acquiring an item through making the item discoverable and accessible to patrons were reviewed to identify the library's application of industry standards and best practices.

Other areas of library service, while similar in name, can be quite different from library to library. This is particularly true of the different programs libraries provide to the public. Though programming ideas are shared within the library community and there are standard offerings among libraries, such as pre-school story time, a significant amount of programming offered by a library is created by staff that is unique to the cultural and educational needs, and wants of a community. The Dark La Crosse Tours are a great example of this.

Every attempt has been made to compare these libraries as equally as possible. However, not all environments in which the libraries operate are equal. Factors such as differences in physical spaces, services provided, and cost-sharing agreements within public library systems all have a bottom line impact on each library. Unique services, like the La Crosse Public Library Archive Department, and operational circumstances, like having three service locations, as best as possible were identified and considered.

Information and data for this study was gathered a number of ways. First, two site visits (three days in October 2014 and one day in March 2015) were made to La Crosse Public Library to gather information, review workflow processes, interview staff, and perform site inspections at the three library locations. Four different surveys were developed and administered to the six libraries in the study. Data was gathered from library annual reports submitted by the libraries to the Wisconsin Department of Instruction. Lastly, staff at all the libraries were contacted to follow up on any data and information as needed.

I'm very grateful to all the staff at the participating libraries that provided their time for this study. All data and information submitted by the other libraries is being provided to the La Crosse Public Library staff. Also, the participating libraries have all agreed to share their contact information with all the other libraries in the study so staff at the libraries can connect to each other as an informal cohort having participated in this study.

The Wisconsin libraries that participated in this study are:

- Fond du Lac Public Library
- Hedberg Public Library (Janesville)
- L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library (Eau Claire)
- Mead Public Library (Sheboygan)
- Oshkosh Public Library

Lastly, without exception, I found the staff at La Crosse Public Library to be open, informative and engaged. I sincerely appreciate the professional and friendly manner in which I was received. This study has benefited enormously from the information and comments offered by La Crosse library staff. They were incredibly accommodating during the course of this study. I truly enjoyed getting to know the staff and my time on site with them.

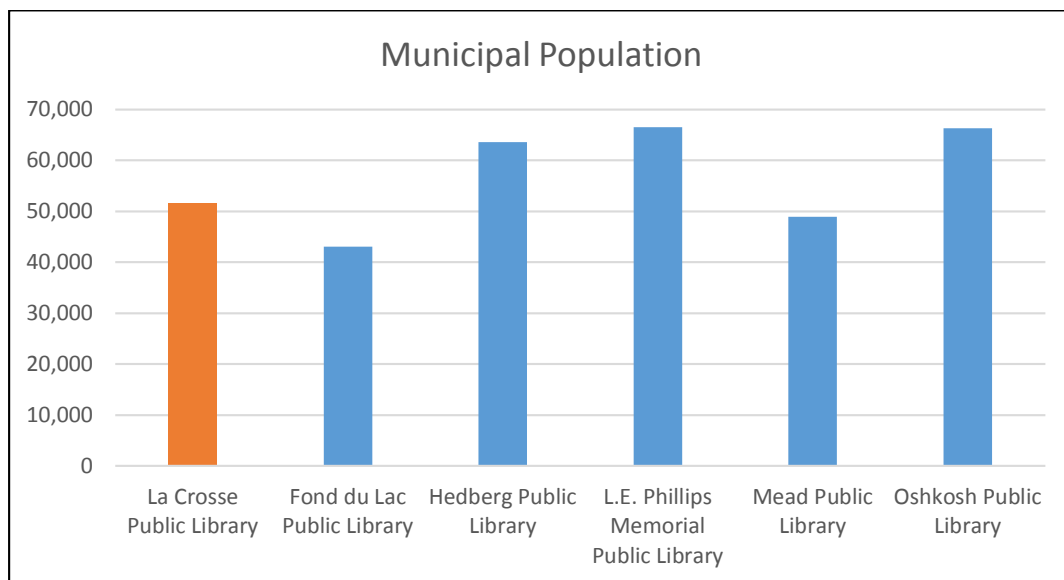
General Library Information, Operations and Administration

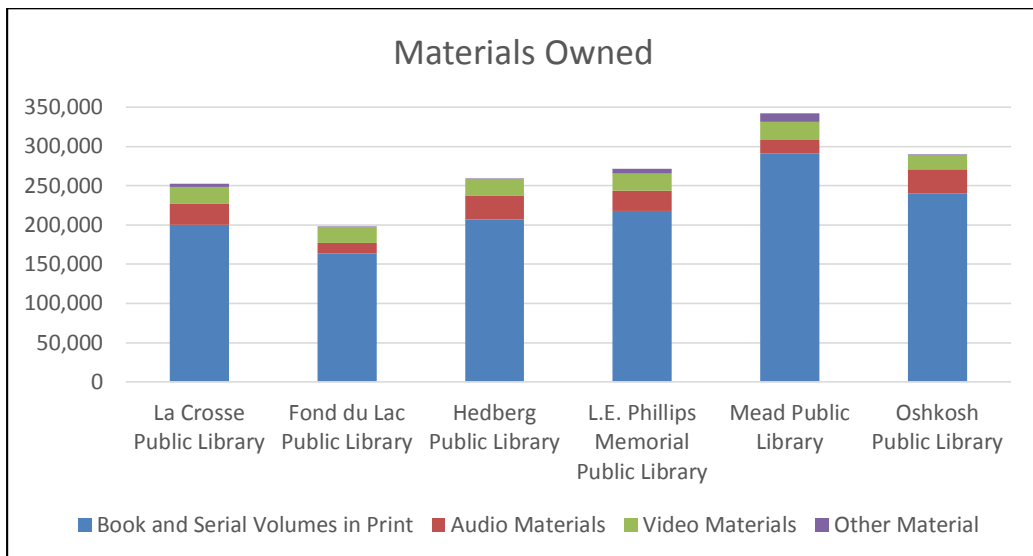
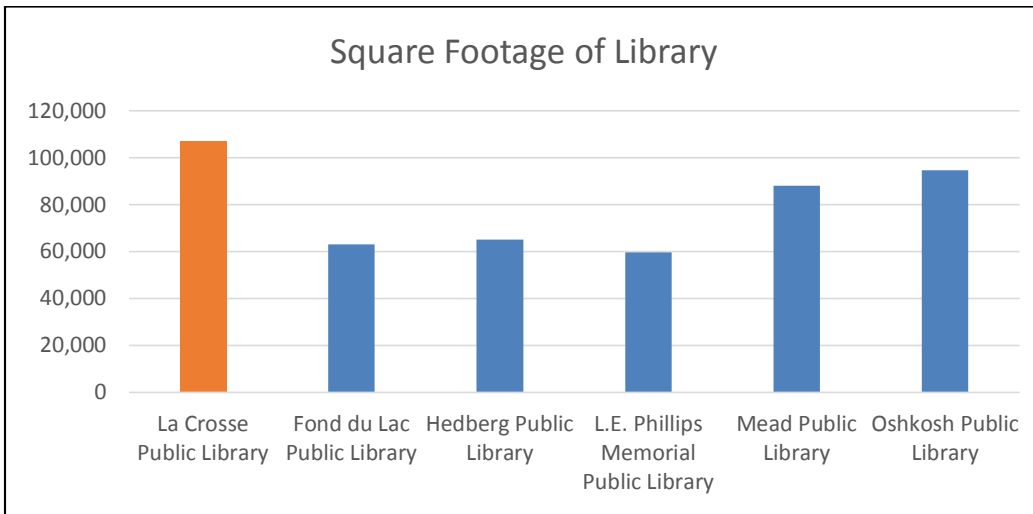
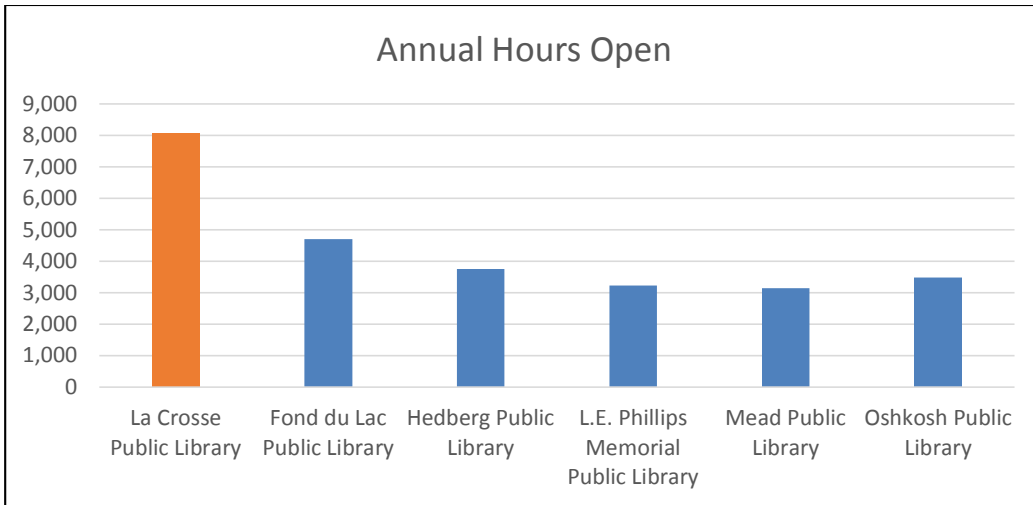
Library Data and Usage

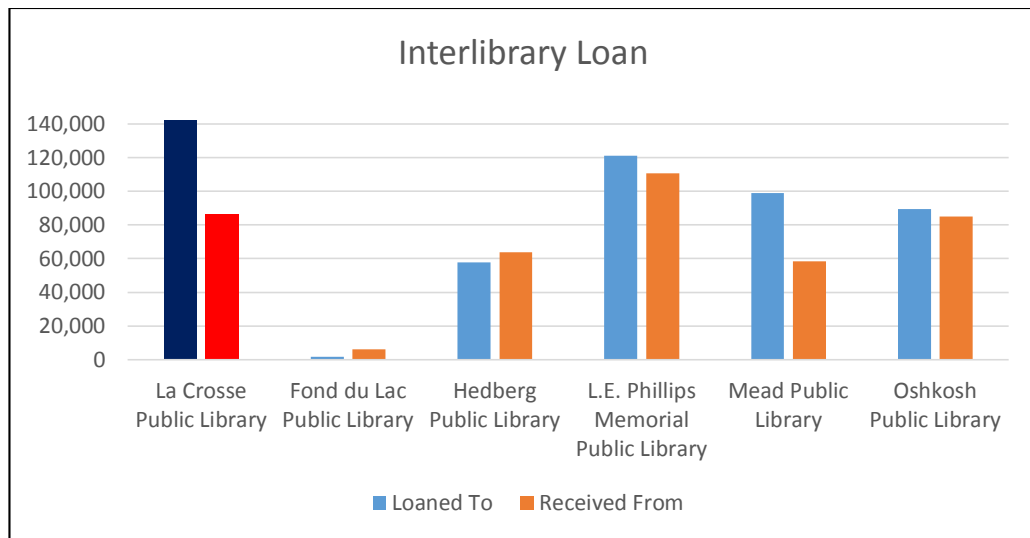
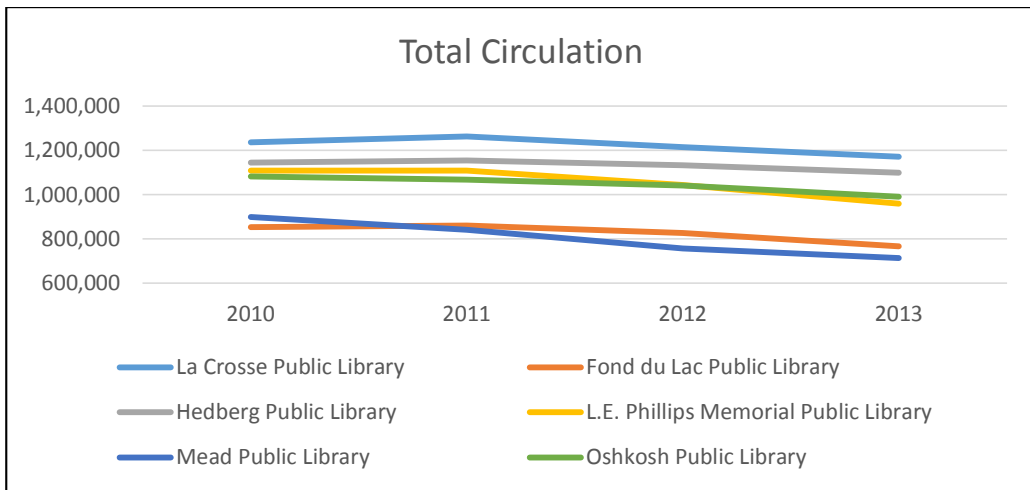
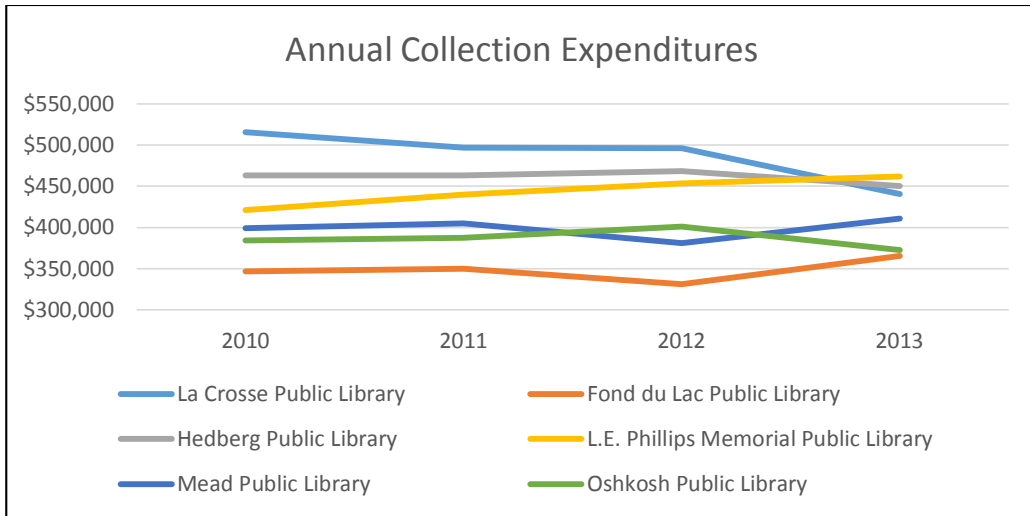
The information shown in this section is from the Wisconsin Public Library Service Data gathered by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) from annual reports submitted by public libraries. Data shown is from 2013, the last full year of data DPI has available for this report, unless otherwise noted. The table below shows the how the libraries in the study rank in comparison to each other for the selected categories.

This is followed by individual graphs showing the various measures of service provided by the participating libraries in their annual reports. This information provides a picture of the impact these different categories can have on a library's budget and staffing needs as discussed later in this section. The following tables and charts include data for La Crosse's two branches and Fond du Lac's one branch, unless otherwise noted.

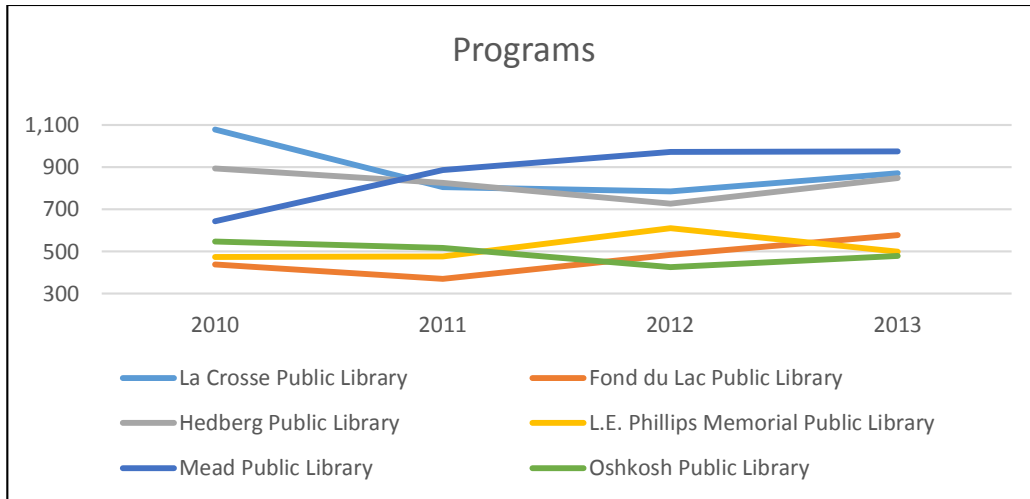
| Data | La Crosse Public Library | Fond du Lac Public Library | Hedberg Public Library | L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library | Mead Public Library | Oshkosh Public Library |
|------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| Municipal Population | 4 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 2 |
| Open Hours | 1 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 4 |
| Square Footage | 1 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 2 |
| Materials Owned | 5 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| Collection Expenditure | 3 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| Total Circulation | 1 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 3 |
| ILL - Loaned | 1 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Programs | 2 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 6 |







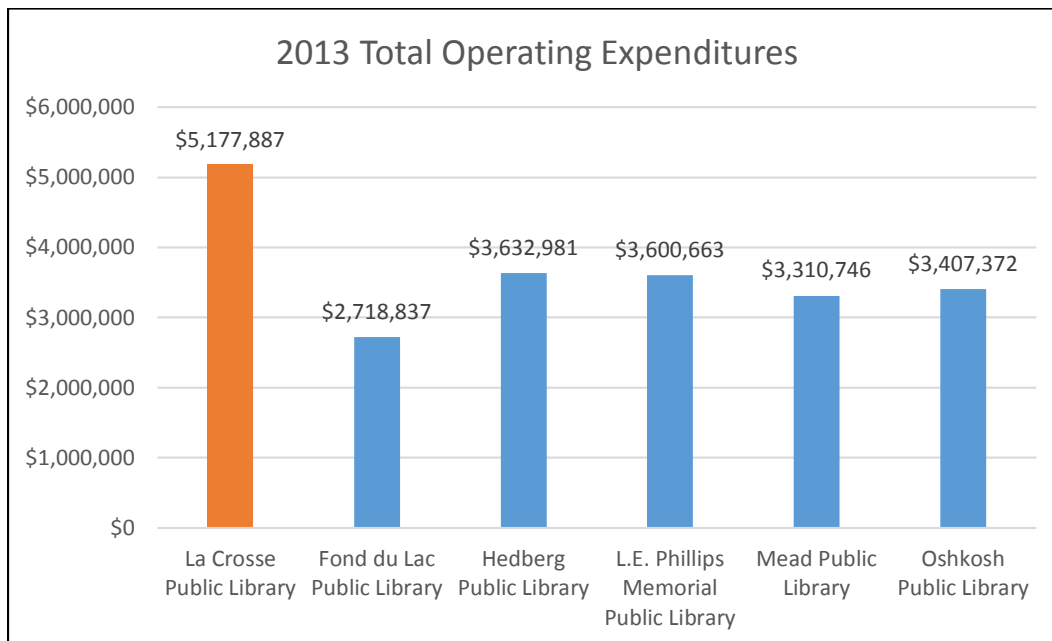
Fond du Lac Public Library's interlibrary loan numbers are much lower due to not being a member of an ILS (shared catalog) consortium.



Library Budget and Staffing

Annual Operating Expenditures

Like every business or organization, libraries must evolve to meet the demands and challenges of providing services to the public. The ability to do this is directly related to the assets and capacities available to a library. A library's budget is a reflection of its priorities. These priorities are identified through the funds allocated for the services and resources the library selects to provide to the public. The following chart displays the annual operating expenditures of the libraries in this study as reported to DPI in 2013.



The difference between the annual operating expenditure of the La Crosse Public Library and the other libraries is quite significant. In the 2014 annual report submitted in March of this year, La Crosse Public Library reports a total expenditure of \$5,093,063, less than reported in 2013, which suggests an effort to reduce expenditures. During the first few months of this year, the library continues to seek new efficiencies and implement changes to lower costs. While it would be preferable to reflect this year's cost saving efforts in the following comparisons, the 2014 total expenditure amount for La Crosse is used because it represents the last full year of budget data.

Archive Department and Branch Services

Only one library in the study (Fond du Lac operates an Express Branch at an annual expense of approximately \$65,000) reported having a unique service or operational circumstance that significantly adds to their total annual library expenditure. In order to more equally align La Crosse's operating expenses with the other libraries in the study, the costs of operating the Archives Department and Branches have been calculated to isolate those expenses from the rest of the La Crosse Public Library annual expenditures. This is simply a budget calculation to better compare the annual expenditures of the libraries participating in this study. This is not a recommendation to eliminate either the Archives Department or the two branches.

The cost analyses (see table at the top of the next page) of the Archives Department and branches is used to calculate an adjusted 2014 total operating expenditure. The only expenses included in the cost analyses are those that would certainly be eliminated if the Archives Department and branches were cut by the library. For example, it would be possible to calculate a share of the IT Manager's time as an expense allocated to the branches. However, it is not likely that the IT Manager would be reduced to less than a full-time employee as a result of no longer supporting technology needs at the branches. This conservative costing approach also is applied to the Archives Department.

The same principle applies to other service support provided by main staff for the branches and Archives Department including library administration support, staff at the main library that develop programming for the branches, technical services provided for branch and archival material cataloging and processing, and the circulation manager that coordinates the scheduling and training of staff at the branches.

The expenses listed are based on information provided by the library, including salary data, branch staff scheduling, and actual 2013 expenses as calculated by the library as part of their analysis of departmental budget allocations in 2014. The projection of one less full-time maintenance employee is based upon the percentage share the branches account for of the total square footage of the three locations. It's certain the total annual expense to operate the branches is likely higher as no general supplies or computer expenses are included. However, in order to not overestimate these costs, a conservative approach was used to calculate the adjusted 2014 total expenditure.

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| Archives Department | |
| Staff | \$ 280,000 |
| Materials, training & software | \$ 20,000 |
| TOTAL | \$ 300,000 |
| | |
| Branches | |
| Staff | \$ 264,000 |
| Materials | \$ 55,000 |
| Maintenance staff | \$ 54,000 |
| Misc. facility expense | \$ 53,000 |
| TOTAL | \$ 426,000 |
| | |
| 2014 Total Operating Expenditure | \$ 5,093,063 |
| Total Archive and Branch Costs | -\$ 726,000 |
| 2014 Adjusted Total Expenditure | \$ 4,403,063 |

While the budget impact of the Archives Department and branches is significant, estimated at approximately \$726,000, the adjusted total expenditure, even using the lower amount as reported in 2014, is still slightly more than \$770,000 higher than the highest amount reported by any of the other libraries in 2013.

Branch comparisons

As previously noted, the Fond du Lac Public Library operates an Express Branch at a cost of approximately \$65,000 per year. In comparison, dividing the total expenses calculated for La Crosse branches, the amount per La Crosse branch equals \$213,000. There are three main reasons for this difference in cost between Fond du Lac and La Crosse.

The first is the Express Branch in Fond du Lac is just open four hours a day, 2:00 to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, compared to the North and South branches being open seven hours during weekdays. The Fond du Lac branch is also open four hours, 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., on Saturdays and Sundays compared to the La Crosse branches being open on Saturdays from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. The two La Crosse branches are open a total of 78 hours per week compared to 28 hours for the Fond du Lac branch. This equates to 11 more open hours per La Crosse branch and 50 more overall branch hours.

The second reason is the Fond du Lac branch is an Express Branch. This means the branch offers limited services by providing a popular browsing collection and an additional location in town for patrons to pick up and drop off materials. There are computer stations in the branch, but these computers only provide online access to the library catalog. There is no other internet access or software available for patrons to use on the computers.

Lastly, the branch is staffed by one person during open hours in comparison to two to three staff being on site during open hours at the La Crosse branch locations. Based on branch circulation data, interviews with library staff, and observations made during site visits, the reason for the additional staff at the La Crosse locations is not due increased use of the branches by patrons. It would be possible to operate the branches with one person at each with potentially only

needing a second person during select hours, if staffing levels were determined based only on the volume of use.

The need for the higher staffing level at the La Crosse branches is due to staff safety. The Fond du Lac Express Branch is in a storefront located in a strip mall complex that includes a very busy grocery store. The interior of the branch is exposed by windows facing the parking lot, and there is constant foot and vehicle traffic around the library. In other words, there are a number of eyes that can view what is happening in the library during their open hours. In contrast, the La Crosse branches are individual buildings with little to no visibility inside the library from outside the buildings. Thus, as is common practice for many businesses in a similar situation, it is desirable to have two people on the premises for the safety of staff.

Recommendation: While the cost analysis of the branches is conservative and the number of materials checked out at the branches on an hourly basis is much lower than at the main library, the branches are a good value on the basis of cost per circulation. The following are two possible options that could be explored to further reduce the costs of operating the two branches.

- The first is a reduction in hours to times that match after school and work hours when the branches experience the majority of their patron traffic, similar to the hours of operation at the Fond du Lac branch.
- A second option, if the current hours are maintained, could be exploring a partnership with a city agency or organization to use the branches as locations for delivering other services to their surrounding neighborhoods. This type of a partnership could provide an additional person on the premises during open hours, reducing the library staff costs at the branches.

After reviewing the documentation of the discussions around the proposed closure of the South Community Library it's clear the residents see the branch as vital to the health and well-being of their neighborhood, which also holds true for the North Community Library. To some degree, the library is viewed as a neighborhood hub similar to a community center. The second option could allow the branch buildings to serve other purposes in the surrounding neighborhoods while preserving the current hours and access to library resources at the branches.

Staffing Comparisons

As with most businesses and organizations, staff costs typically represent the largest portion of an operating budget. Excluding the difference of a dedicated archives department, operating two branches and the higher building maintenance expenses, the main two differences between La Crosse Public Library and the other libraries are the number of staff classified as librarians and the higher amount of full-time staff versus part-time staff. The charts at the beginning of this section, displaying the measurements of service the libraries each provide, indicate that the La Crosse Public Library ranks at the top in a number categories in comparison to the other libraries, though La Crosse's municipal population is fourth among the six libraries. Some of this higher service output can be attributed to having more full-time professional staff. However, the difference between La Crosse and the other libraries is significant as shown in the following tables. The first table compares staff FTE for 2013.

| Libraries | Librarians with ALA MLS | Other Librarians | Total Librarians | Other Paid Staff | Total Staff |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| La Crosse Public Library | 18.65 | 8.40 | 27.05 | 36.10 | 63.15 |
| Fond du Lac Public Library | 9.00 | 4.38 | 13.38 | 22.83 | 36.21 |
| Hedberg Public Library | 11.00 | 2.00 | 13.00 | 34.84 | 47.84 |
| L.E. Phillips Memorial P. L. | 5.00 | 3.00 | 8.00 | 37.75 | 45.75 |
| Mead Public Library | 8.63 | 1.00 | 9.63 | 33.57 | 43.20 |
| Oshkosh Public Library | 11.60 | 0.00 | 11.60 | 24.12 | 35.72 |
| AVERAGE | 9.05 | 2.08 | 11.12 | 30.62 | 41.74 |

The following table shows the impact of the staffing reductions the library has made the last two years. The first row includes the total staffing for La Crosse Public Library as of the beginning of 2015. Since 2013, La Crosse Public library has reduced its staff FTE by six, nearly 10%, for a new total of 57.15. The second row indicates the difference between the 2015 La Crosse staff totals and the average of the other libraries in 2013. Even with factoring in the staffing reductions of the last two years, La Crosse still has nearly 15.5 more total staff FTE than the average of the other five libraries, which is 41.74.

| Changes for Comparison | Librarians with ALA MLS | Other Librarians | Total Librarians | Other Paid Staff | Total Staff |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| La Crosse Public Library - 2015 | 15.65 | 10.40 | 26.05 | 31.10 | 57.15 |
| Difference from avg. of others | 6.60 | 8.32 | 14.93 | 0.48 | 15.41 |

Consistent with the intent to equalize the total library annual expenditures of the libraries in this study, the following table does the same with staffing levels by deducting the staff FTE dedicated to the archive department and branches from the 2015 totals. By subtracting this staff, it brings La Crosse to within five total staff FTE (46.65) of the total staff FTE average of 41.74 of the other libraries. This shows that the result of recent staff reductions, along with the equalizing measures of deducting archive and branch staff from the totals, La Crosse no longer has the highest overall staff FTE among the libraries in the study.

| Changes for Comparison | Librarians with ALA MLS | Other Librarians | Total Librarians | Other Paid Staff | Total Staff |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| W/O Archive Dept. or Branches | 13.65 | 9.40 | 23.05 | 29.60 | 46.65 |
| Difference from avg. of others | 4.60 | 7.32 | 11.93 | -1.02 | 4.91 |

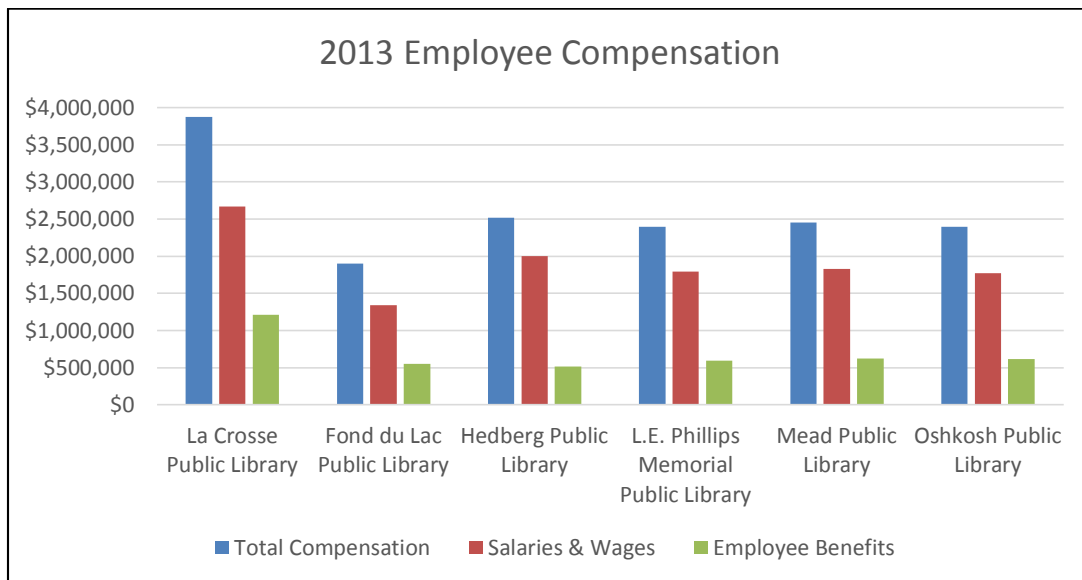
Though La Crosse would no longer have the highest total staff FTE, it would still have the highest staff compensation costs among the libraries in the study. The projected total staff compensation amount for La Crosse Public Library for 2015 is \$3,955,911. Subtracting the staff dedicated to the Archive Department and branches, including one full-time maintenance position, a comparable staff expense to the other libraries comes to \$3,357,911. The highest projected total 2015 staff compensation amount of the other five libraries in the study, Hedberg

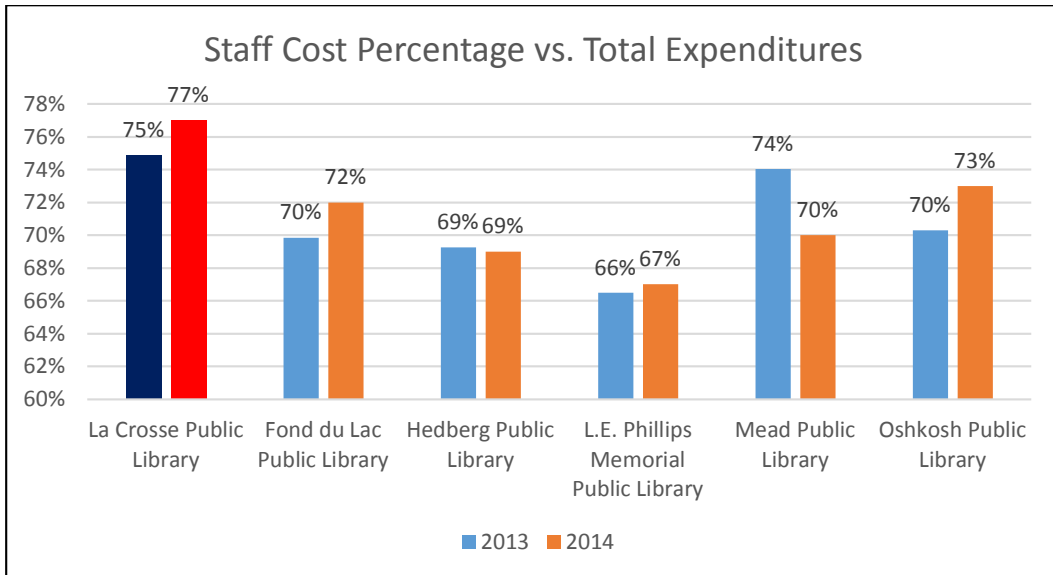
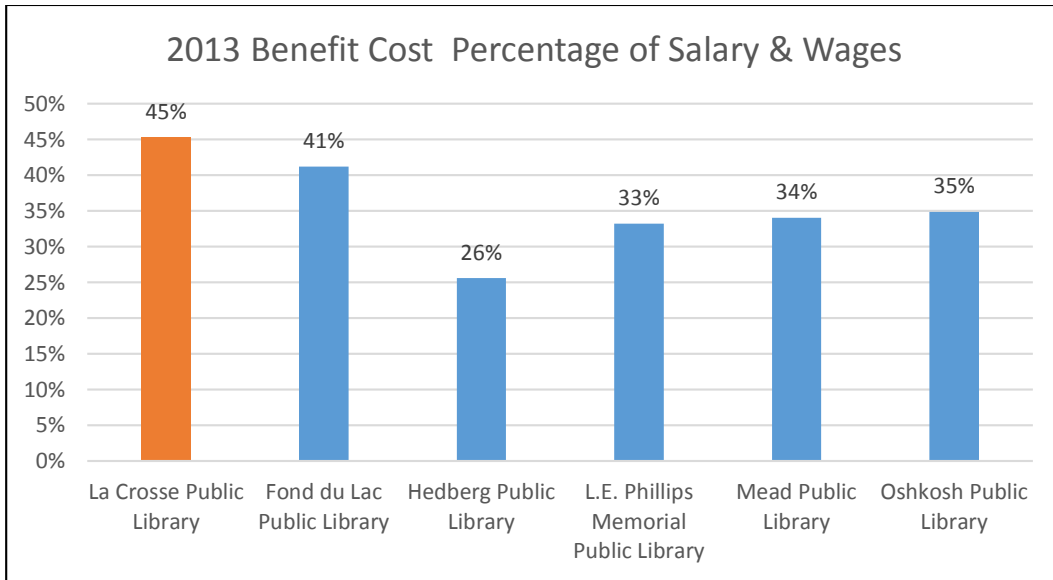
Public Library is the highest at \$2,762,587. The difference between the adjusted La Crosse 2015 total and Hedberg’s projected 2015 total is approximately \$595,000. The difference between La Crosse and the average of the 2015 projected staff compensation totals of the five libraries in the study, which equals \$2,354,445, is a little more than \$1,000,000.

The following are possible reasons the total compensation amount for La Crosse remains significantly higher than the other libraries.

- While La Crosse, in the scenario shown in the table above, would have just two more librarians with an ALA MLS than the next highest library, it would still have nearly ten more staff classified as librarians, 23.05 compared to 13.38, than the next highest library and almost twelve more than the average, 11.12, of the other five libraries. Related to this, the other libraries in the study report having between 37-50% of their staff as full-time. La Crosse Public Library’s percentage of full-time staff is 58%. This indicates more staff at La Crosse have full benefit packages including health care. The impact of this is La Crosse has both the highest employee benefits cost among the six libraries and the highest percentage of total benefit costs in relation to total salary and wages.
- Beyond how many staff receive full benefit packages, the cost of employee benefits can vary from city to city dependent on the benefit plans the city provides to employees. Since these plans are selected and administered by city administration, the costs allocated to the library for employee benefit packages are beyond the control of the library, but nonetheless have a big impact on the library’s budget.
- Lastly, it is possible the library pays higher salary and wage rates than the other libraries for similar positions. Since the library is also participating in a pay and class study that includes most of the libraries included in this study, the salary and wage rates for comparable positions is not addressed in this study.

The following graphs are provided for a visual comparison of the differences in staff compensation from the 2013 annual library reports submitted to DPI.





Recommendation: The library has taken many steps to lower its overall expenses to match available revenue and municipal investment. The total staff FTE has been reduced, mostly by not filling vacant positions and developing a new rotation to staff the branches. The library should continue to evaluate different options for staffing on an ongoing basis, especially when positions become vacant. Potential options include determining whether vacant positions should be filled or not, whether positions should be full time or part time, and determining appropriate classifications for the various positions in the different departments. On an operational level, determining new staffing options could be part the duties of an internal quality team, which is recommended later in this section. Outside of staffing decisions to meet operational needs, it is the responsibility of the library board and administration to balance organizational values and budgetary limitations when determining staffing for the library.

Facility Expenses

In order to more accurately compare the facility related expenses, it is necessary to exclude the maintenance expenses related to La Crosse's two branch locations. Of the libraries in the study, only Fond du Lac operates a branch. In addition, because not all the libraries contract for building security, like La Crosse does for the main library, the cost for contracted security services is also excluded from this comparison.

The exclusion of security costs is only done to more accurately compare facility related expenses of the libraries in the study. Two of the other libraries also contract for security services, but only during limited open hours. Building safety and security related issues that libraries must manage can vary greatly between communities. Patron and staff safety must be a top priority of any public building. This is especially true for a library, which the community expects to be a safe place for residents of all ages. There is no recommendation to change security at the Main Library. The library, with consultation from local law enforcement, is best suited at making the determination of its security needs.

The total maintenance support costs for the three La Crosse library locations is approximately \$675,000 per year. Excluding annual security costs of \$63,000, the remaining facility related expenses equals about \$612,000. Subtracting the branch maintenance expenses of \$107,000 leaves a remainder of approximately \$505,000 in costs related to building maintenance at La Crosse's Main Library.

One other library in the study, Hedberg Public Library with annual facility related expenses of approximately \$493,000, has a facility budget for a main library that is similar to La Crosse. The other four libraries' facility related expenses range from \$230,000 (Fond du Lac, including facility and maintenance expenses for their branch) to \$353,000 (Mead Public Library), which is nearly 30% less than La Crosse. The apparent difference at the four libraries with lower facility costs is they outsource some of their maintenance and custodial needs. In the case of L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library, the service is provided by city staff, for which the library is charged, while the other libraries contract with private custodial services.

The following facility related budget items, where applicable for each library, are included in this comparison. The cost for any building and other facility related insurance policies are not included.

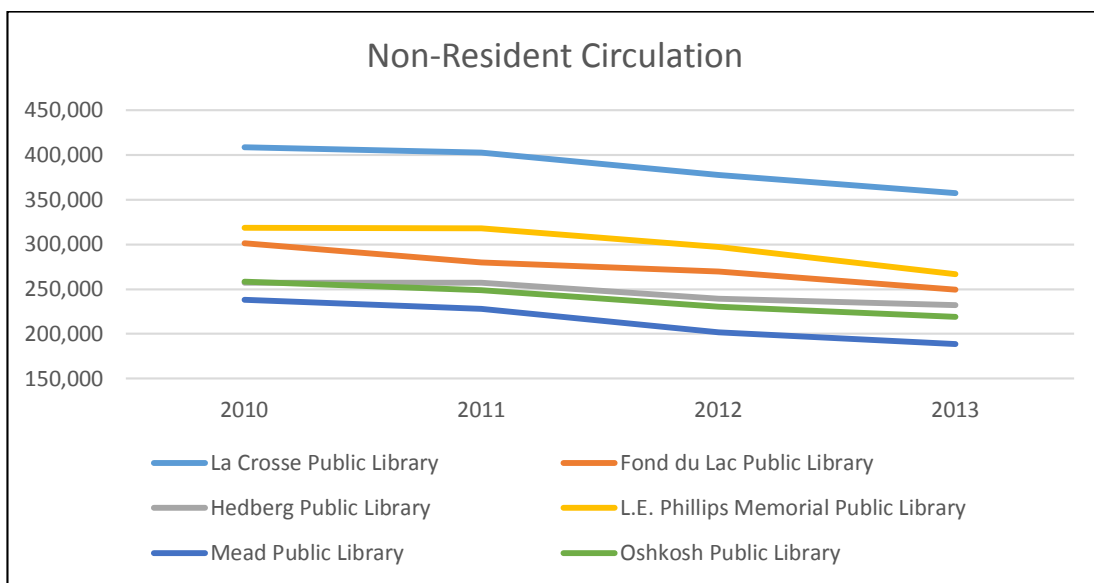
- Maintenance staff salaries/wages and benefits, including health insurance.
- Contracted custodial services.
- Annual ongoing funds dedicated to building repairs and improvements, including regular contracted maintenance (HVAC; elevator, boiler and fire extinguisher inspections/permits; floor mat/laundry service; maintenance to the grounds including lawn and plant care in addition to snow removal).
- Custodial and building material supplies.
- Utilities (water, sewer, storm water, garbage, electricity, gas service, telephone).
- Repairs to tools and equipment, and equipment rental.
- Parking and facility rental.

Recommendation: It is beyond the scope of this study to examine the cost effectiveness of a library's building maintenance program. While each facility is unique and the age of a building can have a major impact on building maintenance expenses, the other libraries in this study, like La Crosse, are located in older buildings. It is recommended the library explore the building

maintenance programs of the four libraries that report much lower facility related expenses. The intent would be to determine what differences exist that could account for the difference in ongoing building maintenance costs from four of the libraries and determine if La Crosse is able to make any changes to its building maintenance program to achieve any efficiencies and cost savings.

Income

The scope of this study did not include analyzing the income of the library. It would be difficult to provide any comparison assessment with the other libraries' income as the circumstances of each library are very different and complex. Beyond municipal investment in the library, this is true for both resource library agreements within library systems and for reimbursement laws for non-resident library use. The La Crosse Public Library does provide significant service to non-residents, as evidenced by the chart on the following page, however the library is limited in what influence it can have on the laws governing non-resident library use reimbursements. Regarding resource library payments, the agreement for resource library services is best left to the negotiations between La Crosse Public Library and Winding Rivers Library System.



Other areas reviewed related to improving cost effectiveness and/or services

Library Planning

Many libraries engage in long-range strategic planning to chart their service goals and activities. This is often done by identifying a community's aspirations for library services and resources by engaging the community through surveys and conversations, in addition to using available demographic and library usage data and information. Three of the participating libraries indicate they have a current long-range strategic plan. The other two have indicated they will be engaging in a planning process this year due to their plans expiring in 2014.

Recommendation: While the La Crosse Public Library director does internal operational planning to set goals for the library, it is recommended the library consider engaging in a formal strategic and community-focused planning process to guide future library decision-making. The library should develop a strategic plan that identifies the community's aspirations for library services and resources through community surveys and conversations. The goal is to develop a plan to deliver library services that provide the greatest impact and value to the community within the available assets and capacities of the library.

City, County and Partner Agency Collaboration and Cooperation

There are many similar operational functions that libraries and their counterparts in their city or county perform to support the services they deliver to the public. This can include accounting, HR, technology support, building maintenance and custodial services, and purchasing.

The participating libraries were asked the following:

1. Does their city or county fulfill any of their ongoing operation functions such as providing technology support or building maintenance?
2. Does the library fulfill any ongoing operational functions for any city or county agencies?

The most common service arrangements between the library and city and/or county departments involve accounting and HR, which is the case at the La Crosse Public Library. Where there are other types of service arrangements between the library and city, such as telephone or building maintenance, the libraries indicated they are charged for the services they receive. The following responses from the libraries are provided as examples of the different operational service arrangements the libraries have with their cities.

Fond du Lac Public Library

1. *Administrative support for finance and HR including handling all hiring. We also have our telephone (VOIP) through the city's IT department. The city does charge the library for providing these services.*
2. *While not a city or county service, we partner with the Fond du Lac Literacy services office, a non-profit agency primarily funded through United Way. The three Literacy staff members are de-facto Library staff members, and the Library provides payroll and financial services, office space, supplies, and printing to the agency free of charge. Literacy pays for the salary and benefits of the staff members.*

Hedberg Public Library

1. *The city provides assistance with bill paying and HR. We do have staff enter in the bills, but it's a city system and the city ultimately pays the bill and maintains the system. The HR department also does some work for us, though we have an individual here at the library who works 20% of her time on HR issues, is trained on HR, and coordinates hiring and other activities with the city.*
2. *From time to time our graphic artist will provide a service to the city (creating an image or something like that). We also have a bilingual coordinator who is available to translate some documents into Spanish. We would charge an hourly rate for the service.*

L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library

1. *Building Maintenance – Provided by City Staff (The building maintenance/custodial staff are charged by the City to the Library by contract hours) ; VOIP Phone System – Shared with City and County; Imaging System – Shared with City; Accounting Web Based System (MUNIS) – Shared with City; Payroll Web Based System (Highline) – Shared with City*

Mead Public Library

1. *Financials & human resources tasks are shared between the library and these city departments, depending on the task. Also, we use city email service and accounting system, so very limited IT support.*

Efficiency implementation or service improvement

Finding efficiencies and improving services can often go hand in hand. Sometimes it just takes a little creative problem-solving to make a big impact on both the services to patrons and a library's bottom line. The libraries were asked what they have changed or implemented to gain efficiency and/or improve services. The following are responses from the libraries.

La Crosse Public Library

- *Self-pick up of holds was established at the North Community Library*
- *Credit card machines were installed at both branches*
- *Provide space to AARP volunteers to provide free tax preparation help for seniors and low-income taxpayers every year at Main.*

Fond du Lac Public Library

- *Opened Express Branch on East Side of town*
- *Converted several storage areas in the lower level into meeting rooms and swapped existing Technical Services area with meeting room, resulting in bigger meeting room and one that is available any time the Library is open.*

Hedberg Public Library

- *We've added RFID and a sorter.*
- *One thing we are looking at doing with a building remodel is to merge desks (circulation, information, and reference) into one service point. With some cross training we should be able to reduce the number of dedicated staff we have at a desk, which will allow more freedom to roam the floor, and provide better service to the public by having one central service point.*

Mead Public Library

- *We have an internal quality team dedicated to improving our services and looking for efficiencies throughout the organization.*

Recommendation: With the formation of an internal quality team, the Mead Public Library has discovered and implemented solutions to gain efficiencies and improve service. This team has played a significant role in the library discovering ways to reduce staffing without reducing library hours or sacrificing service. Over the course of 2013 and 2014 Mead reduced its total staff FTE by 5.5. It projects it will reduce its staff FTE by another 2.25 in 2015.

It is recommended that a similar team is created at the La Crosse Public Library. The team would meet regularly to determine which library departments, services, areas and processes it will examine to identify opportunities to streamline different workflows in the library. The team could reach out to peer libraries that have streamlined workflows and found efficiencies to improve service. The team also could review relevant literature from library studies that have identified workflow and staffing solutions to improve efficiency.

Library Volunteers

Volunteers are vital library supporters due to their dedication and valuable contributions. While their service to the library is greatly appreciated it can involve significant staff time to recruit, schedule, and coordinate tasks for volunteers. In addition, many of functions related to providing library services are dependent on specific expertise and/or a regular commitment of time to keep everything running smoothly for patrons.

Because of these factors, there are limitations to the types of tasks and duties a volunteer can assist with at the library. The libraries that participated in the survey indicate their volunteers do many of the same things the volunteers do at the La Crosse Public Library. Like a number of the other libraries, the La Crosse Public Library has a volunteer coordinator that manages the volunteer program. The number of volunteers that help at the La Crosse Public Library is almost equal to the number of employees at the library. The total annual hours volunteers assist at the library equate to nearly a 1.25 full-time staff or about 50 hours per week.

Budget Reductions

Lastly, related to the library budget, the following list is provided as an example of actions the libraries have each taken over the past five to six years to decrease costs. Most of the examples are related to making changes in staffing or compensation to staff.

La Crosse Public Library

- *One full time maintenance position split into two part-time positions. (2011)*
- *One 20 hour/week Youth Services associate librarian position eliminated. (2011)*
- *Closed for two unpaid furlough days – only city department to do so. (2011)*
- *Eliminated one half-time maintenance position. (2011)*
- *Hours of operation reduced at Main library by 3 hours/week; 2 part-time circulation positions and 1 part-time reference position cut by 4 hours/week. (2012)*
- *Hours of operation reduced in Archives department by 16 hours/week; 2 Archives aide positions eliminated; and 2 Archives library assistant positions cut from 20 hours/week to 15 hours/week. (2012)*
- *10% reduction in professional development budget. (2012)*
- *Two tech services aide positions eliminated. (2012)*
- *Two part-time positions in Administration have hours cut from 20 hours/week to 15 hours/week. (2012)*
- *5% reduction in materials budget. (2012)*
- *5% reduction in automation/technology budget. (2012)*
- *Full time community relations position cut to 24 hours/week. (2012)*
- *Eliminated part-time gaming position and gaming program. (2013)*

- Reduced community relations position further to 16 hours/week. (2013)
- Materials budget, automation budget and professional development budget all frozen at 2012 levels. (2013)
- Restored one Archives aide position, but permanently eliminated the other. (2013)
- Hours of operation reduced at both branches by 6 hours/week. (2014)
- Did not fill positions of branch manager (vacated by retirement), full-time assistant branch manager, and a three quarter time branch aide position. This loss of these positions resulted in staff at all locations being re-deployed to cover the hours. (2014)
- Materials budget reduced by 11.6% or \$44,000. (2014)
- Another part-time aide position eliminated (2014)

Fond du Lac Public Library

- Elimination of the Bookmobile service to outlying areas, daycare centers and other service points. Total cost for the program was around \$35,000 yearly, not including cost of bookmobile. However, one could argue that some of the services have been utilized at the Express Branch location so total cost savings is not \$35K.
- Most savings, and budget cuts, have come with any retirement or job vacancy. Any time a position has been vacant, a study is done determining whether it can be eliminated or turned into two part time—no benefits—positions, or converted to one part time, no benefits, position. Over the past 5 years, three full time positions (40 hours/week) have been eliminated. They include Assistant Director, Librarian, and bookmobile driver. However, at least one fulltime position (IT Specialist) was created in that time period.
- Elimination of 3 page positions. Reduction in number of 19.5 hour/week pages. Most work 12 hours /week.
- There have been significant savings converting a full time position to part time, not due to a reduction in hours, but instead the elimination of healthcare benefits. Staff positions affected include:
 - Secretary (40 hours to 35 per week)
 - Custodian (40 hours to 30 hours) and a re-classification of the position from Maintenance Engineer to Custodian
 - Head of Circulation (40 hours to 29.5 hours per week)
 - 1 clerk position Clerk (35 to 19.5)
 - 4 Clerk positions (29-40 hours per week to 19.5) Elimination of benefits for all
- Elimination of Good Attendance Bonuses and Longevity pay. Increase in healthcare deductibles and co-pays.
- Travel & Training reduced by \$3,000 (37%).
- Professional Memberships eliminated (\$2,000).
- Since 2009, magazines and periodicals, and electronic databases have been cut by \$40,000.

Hedberg Public Library

- In 2009 had 49.2 FTE's. In 2015 have 47.84 FTE's. Not quite 1.5 positions, but close. Those were part time positions in circulation.
- A COLA increase is basically non-existent now.
- There have been years when CE and training has been cut by 10% or more, but we actually have maintained it pretty well and have a good fund for training. They also have a Foundation and put funds from that organization towards CE and training.
- About 5 years ago cut Friday hours back, to close at 5:00 p.m. instead of 9:00 p.m.

L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library

- *Eliminated full-time IT Manager position (40 hours)(2010)*
- *Eliminated 7 Desk Clerk hours and 10 Page hours (2015)*

Mead Public Library

- *Reduction in overall staffing - 2011: 43.20 FTE, 2012: 43.20 FTE, 2013: 43.19 FTE, 2014: 37.63 FTE, 2015 (projected): 35.44 FTE*
- *Converted 1 FT position made into 2 PT, still 40 hours.*
- *\$100 monthly spousal surcharge for healthcare if spouse is eligible through their employer.*
- *Staff will receive raises in 2015, first true wage increase since 2008. The raise was attained while overall library budget was flat.*
- *3 furlough days in 2011, 2013, 2013, 2014. None in 2015*
- *Travel/training/CE - \$0 in operating budget. Depend on the interest of a large bequest to provide training to staff. Currently, budgeted at \$3000 annually for entire staff.*
- *Have been instructed by the city administrator to begin constructing another flat budget for 2016. If the common council indeed requires another flat budget, the library will ask for less in real (not adjusted) dollars than in 1996!*

Oshkosh Public Library

- *Eliminated annual longevity payments in 2014 budget.*

Circulation Services

The La Crosse Public Library circulation department was reviewed to determine the efficiency of its workflow processes. Also, the composition of La Crosse circulation staff was compared to the other libraries in the study. Lastly, technology and automation options to improve circulation material processing speed and reduce staff time were assessed to identify implementation feasibility and potential return on investment.

Departmental Comparison Information

Circulation staff account for 27% of the library's total staff. This is the result of circulation services handling a high volume of materials each day and circulation desks being the main service point for patrons. The typical positions in library circulation departments include shelvers/pages/aides; library clerks/lead aides; library assistants; and managers. The educational requirements for these positions are almost identical among the libraries in the study.

Generally, the types of duties associated with the different circulation positions at the libraries were very similar to each other. The circulation staff at all the libraries also perform non-circulation duties such as providing programming assistance, managing meeting room reservations, and a number of other tasks. The libraries provided an estimate of the percentage of circulation staff time needed to perform these other duties. The time spent on these activities at the six libraries appear to be close to equal.

Each library also indicates that they rotate staff among the different circulation duties, both for cross-training reasons and to limit staff fatigue from doing any one task for too long. The minimum number of staff working at the circulation desk does vary among the libraries. Fond du Lac Public Library and Hedberg Public Library each have one person at the desk during open hours, however, they have another person scheduled to back up the circulation desk whenever needed. When not covering the desk, the backup person performs other circulation tasks. La Crosse Public Library and Mead Public Library have a minimum of two people on the desk and L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library and Oshkosh Public Library indicate they staff their circulation desks with three people. Though staff at circulation desks assist patrons and have a number of other responsibilities, the ability to schedule fewer staff at the circulation desk correlates to patrons' use of self-checkout stations. Self-checkout is discussed in more detail later in this section.

One of the duties in circulation that can be time consuming is processing hold material requests for patrons. For libraries in a shared catalog consortium, this not only includes retrieving materials for their own patrons, but also processing items to fill patron requests at other libraries. The list that informs staff which items need to be retrieved from shelving to fill patron requests is typically called a pull or pick list.

The staff at the libraries all run their pull/pick lists one to two times per day. The libraries report retrieving approximately 800 to 2,400 items from their shelves each week to fill requests for patrons. The library reporting approximately 800 items per week is Fond du Lac, which is lower due to not being a member of a shared catalog consortium. La Crosse reports pulling nearly 2,000 items from their shelves to fill patron hold requests each week. While running the pull/pick list more than once per day improves service to patrons, many libraries find it's also more efficient.

Staff time can be greatly impacted by the size of pull/pick lists and the amount of delivery materials a library has to process, both of which are influenced by the number of holds a patron may place on materials in the catalog. Hold limits are typically determined by the shared catalog consortium. The number of holds allowed among the libraries in the study ranges from twenty (La Crosse) to ninety-nine (Mead). Despite having the lowest number of holds allowed, except for a dip in 2014 circulation (see table below), a review of circulation data shows La Crosse had the highest total circulation the previous five years.

Staffing and Circulation Comparisons

The tables below show how the La Crosse Circulation Department compares to the other libraries in the categories of total staff FTE, staff hours scheduled per week, the combined hours the library is open at all locations each week, and 2014 total circulation. Separate totals for the main library and branches are also shown for La Crosse and Fond du Lac. The separate main library data provides comparison information for all the libraries in the study and the branch data allows branch circulation activity to be compared between La Crosse and Fond du Lac.

| Staff FTE | La Crosse | Fond du Lac | Hedberg | L.E. Phillips | Mead | Oshkosh |
|------------------|------------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------------|-------------|----------------|
| Total | 15.55 | 10.40 | 11.90 | 11.88 | 12.93 | 13.70 |
| Main Library | 10.20 | 9.70 | | | | |
| Branches | 5.35 | 0.70 | | | | |

| Weekly Staff Hours | La Crosse | Fond du Lac | Hedberg | L.E. Phillips | Mead | Oshkosh |
|---------------------------|------------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------------|-------------|----------------|
| Total | 622 | 416 | 476 | 475 | 517 | 548.00 |
| Main Library | 408 | 388 | | | | |
| Branches | 214 | 28 | | | | |

| Weekly Open Hours | La Crosse | Fond du Lac | Hedberg | L.E. Phillips | Mead | Oshkosh |
|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------------|-------------|----------------|
| Total | 143 | 92 | 68 | 63 | 64 | 69 |
| Main Library | 65 | 64 | | | | |
| Branches | 78 | 28 | | | | |

| 2014 Circulation | La Crosse | Fond du Lac | Hedberg | L.E. Phillips | Mead | Oshkosh |
|-------------------------|------------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------------|-------------|----------------|
| Total | 997,674 | 734,563 | 1,059,057 | 887,512 | 648,034 | 922,754 |
| Main Library | 841,086 | 703,629 | | | | |
| Branches | 156,588 | 27,598 | | | | |

The library experienced nearly a 15% decline in circulation from 2013 to 2014. Circulation at La Crosse and the other libraries in this study has been decreasing the last few years. However, the drop in circulation between 2013 and 2014 at the other libraries ranges from 4% to 9%. Quarterly data shows La Crosse's total circulation experienced a higher year to date decrease during the second quarter in 2014 than it did during the other three quarters. The library catalog migrated to a new platform in second quarter of 2014 and some of lower circulation last year is likely attributed to the migration. Besides the time a catalog needs to be offline during the installation of a new platform, patron usage can lessen while patrons become accustomed to a new online library catalog interface.

Despite the drop in circulation at La Crosse, the library still had the second highest circulation in 2014 of the libraries in the study. When limited to main library circulation data, La Crosse's just about equals the average of the other five libraries, though the main library has the second least total circulation staff hours scheduled each week. The difference being just a half-time employee more than Fond du Lac.

The following two tables compare hourly circulation rates at the libraries. The first shows circulation per staff hour scheduled. When comparing main library rates, La Crosse ranks second to Hedberg. As noted later in this section, Hedberg is the only library of the six with an automated materials handling system. La Crosse's main library ranks third among the libraries in circulation per hour that the library is open. While La Crosse's branches circulate more items per open hour than Fond du Lac, its lower circulation per staff hour is a result of the additional staff needed at La Crosse's branches for staff safety.

| Circulation Per Staff | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------------|-------------|----------------|
| Hour | La Crosse | Fond du Lac | Hedberg | L.E. Phillips | Mead | Oshkosh |
| Overall | 31 | 34 | 43 | 36 | 24 | 32 |
| Main Library | 40 | 35 | | | | |
| Branches | 14 | 19 | | | | |

| Circulation Per Open | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------------|-------------|----------------|
| Hour | La Crosse | Fond du Lac | Hedberg | L.E. Phillips | Mead | Oshkosh |
| Overall | 134 | 154 | 300 | 271 | 195 | 257 |
| Main Library | 249 | 211 | | | | |
| Branches | 39 | 19 | | | | |

Patron self-checkout

All but one of the libraries, L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library, have self-checkout stations for patrons. However, La Crosse is the only library that does not have self-service hold material pick up, often referred to as open holds shelves in libraries. Of the 5 libraries with self-checkout stations, La Crosse has the lowest percentage of materials checked out at its self-checkout stations. Including the branches, self-checkout accounts for 28% of total material checkout at La Crosse. At the main library, 34% of materials are checked out at self-checkout stations. In comparison, the other four libraries' self-checkout totals account for 60-80% of their total checkouts.

The library with 60% is the Mead Public Library. Mead just implemented open holds shelves and has seen its self-checkout totals increase since this change. All the libraries reported the percentage of items checked out via self-checkout significantly increased after they implemented open hold shelves.

Recommendation: Based on site visit observations, total circulation staff FTE and per hour circulation rates, it is apparent circulation services is very well organized and managed at La Crosse. Outside of considering automation solutions, which is discussed later in this section, the only recommendation is for the library to implement open holds shelves at the main library. The library has expressed some concern about increased theft with open holds shelves. The other

libraries were asked if they experienced any increase in theft after they implemented open holds shelves and all reported they had not. If the library implements open holds shelves at the main library, it will almost certainly experience an increase in the amount of items checked out at self-checkout stations, which will have a positive impact on circulation staff capacity.

Efficiency Improvements

The libraries were asked what changes they've made in the last 5 years to improve efficiency of circulation processes. Their responses are provided below.

La Crosse Public Library

- 2012 – Streamlined aide processes including workroom reconfiguration, check in, shelving, shelf maintenance, and staff accountability.
- 2013 – Missing/Damaged Items procedure updated and streamlined. Templates provided for staff to ensure consistent messaging.
- 2014 – New ILS tools such as Macros implemented/required use for all staff on service points.
- 2014 – Circulation Restructuring. Circulation assistants at all locations will answer to one Manager/Assistant Manager team.
- 2014 – All policy and procedures streamlined for more consistent patron and staff experience.
- 2014 – All circulation staff to use the same scheduling software.
- 2014 – Creating strategy for more inter-departmental assistance. Collection Management staff to engage at service points more. Circulation staff to help with processing/database clean up. (in development)
- 2015 – Help in development and implementation of more streamlined and holistic approach to collection development, processing, and shelving.
- 2015 – All circulation desks revisited to keep user and staff experience as consistent as possible.
- 2015 – All circulation assistants to rotate among the three LPL sites.

Fond du Lac Public Library

- Self-checks were installed in 2010 and that has made a huge difference in our circulation desk staffing. The number of staff stations at the circulation desk went from 3 to 1 (we also moved the main phone to the back room).
- When we implemented a stand-alone ILS in late 2011, our delivery bins dropped significantly. When on the shared system, we commonly filled and emptied 16-20+ bins per day, Mon-Fri. Now we have 1-2 bins, 4-days per week. (And yes, ILL has increased.)
- Sorting as staff check in materials has evolved over the last few years. We used to check in and sort materials onto 4-6 carts and a lot of stationary shelving in the circulation dept. Now we only put mending and donations on shelves, so everything goes on one of 10 carts (arranged by where collections are located throughout the building) and straight to the shelf. We have even moved our delivery bins under the check in stations so staff only needs to take a step or two to fill a bin.
- Since 2010, we have moved from mostly 30-40 hour per week circulation clerks to almost all 19.5 hour per week clerks (who do not receive health insurance benefits). While this is not necessarily more efficient, it has had a lot of impact on the circulation department.

- There has been more turn over which requires more training and results in less experienced staff. Of course, we had an aging staff, so the turn over may have been inevitable.
- It is more difficult to communicate with everyone and schedule meetings, but we have more flexibility with a larger number of people.
- Most circulation people are on 4 hour shifts—person 1=8:30-12:30/person 2=9-1 then 12:30-4:30 and 4:15-8:15. A few minutes overlap allows for communicating between shift changes. We do not need to schedule lunches and swapping shifts is a straight 4 hour for 4 hour change.
- We try to give people consistent schedules. Part time people have outside lives. By giving them a consistent two-week rotating schedule, they can schedule the rest of their life around work and minimize schedule changes. It doesn't always work, but it helps.
- In 2013-2014, I have hired two "floating" clerks and two floating pages—flexible schedule, flexible hour clerks to cover for vacations, illnesses, busy/slow times, etc. Their schedule changes from week to week and if we get really busy or someone calls in sick, we call a floater. They average fewer hours in our slow months (12-15 hours per week) and more hours in summer (20-25). This way the schedule does not get thrown into chaos when someone goes on vacation. And when we get busier, we can schedule more staff.

Hedberg Public Library

- *May, 2010 – Combined Circulation Clerks and Assistants into a single job description*
- *April, 2010 – Renovated Circulation Workroom to add Sorter*
- *June, 2010 – Added self-checkout machines*
- *Sept, 2010 – Renovated Circulation Service desk to 2 workstations*
- *June, 2010 – 8-bin Sorter, one staff induction point and one patron induction point*
- *June, 2011 – Introduced Shelving positions (minimum wage, Grade 1 positions)*
- *October 2012 – Expanded Sorter with 4 more bins*

L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library

- *A renovation in 2009 moved the physical location of both the Circulation desk and the Circulation workroom. This change allowed for the addition of self-service hold shelves and it also changed the shelving process. Before the renovation, the check-in process consisted of scanning materials to check- in the items, placing the items on a cart, transferring items from the cart to various Circulation shelves organized by subject area, and finally removing items from these shelves in Dewey order to another cart and then returning them back to public shelving for browsing. After the renovation, Circulation changed from that process to a much more efficient "sort-to-cart" process that involved scanning materials to check-in the items, placing items on one of various "sort carts" in order and then returning them to public shelving.*

Mead Public Library

- *Implemented Self Service holds (end of 2014)*
- *Began taking credit card payments (2010)*
- *Eliminated shelving units for holding returned materials/ items now put directly on carts after checked in (2014).*

- *No longer taking disc items out of cases to inspect for damage. Now take the customer's word for it if they say "disc was cracked when I checked it out" (2014)*
- *Page staff who do not perform direct customer service now process & file items on hold—they also do the pick list. They can work uninterrupted. (2014).*

Automation Solutions

There are two automation solutions that libraries have implemented to reduce material handling and improve the speed of processing materials in circulation. The first is switching from barcodes to Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags to track library materials. The second is installing Automated Materials Handling (AMH) systems. Both have a number of pros and cons and both involve a significant one-time capital investment in both funds and staff time. In addition, there are ongoing expenses that must be factored into any consideration of either RFID or AMH.

RFID

There are many reports available about RFID implementation since libraries began adopting this technology to a limited degree in the early 2000's. These reports provide case studies that attempt to document the impact of moving to RFID technology for managing library material inventory, including checking in and checking out materials by staff and patrons. Despite more libraries implementing RFID over the last 10 years, though still small in number, there is no clear data that accurately predicts whether or not it's cost effective for a library to switch to RFID. One of the participating libraries of this study, Hedberg, implemented both RFID and AMH in 2009-2010, but has not tracked any financial return on investment.

Libraries that have implemented RFID have reported anywhere from zero savings in staff time to significantly reducing circulation processing time. The reason these different outcomes is each library's internal circulation workflows can range from those that are already efficiently streamlined to those that are quite inefficient. A workflow that is inefficient stands to gain the most ROI from implementing RFID. Based on circulation rates and observations made during two site visits, La Crosse's circulation workflow is organized and managed very efficiently.

The following is a list of potential benefits from implementing RFID. Some benefits are related to reducing costs while others identify potential service quality improvements.

- Increase patron use of self-check out
- Reduce lines at circulation
- Reduction in circulation desk staff
- Return items to shelf more quickly
- Reduce staff injuries
- Increase security/reduce theft
- Increased equipment reliability
- Better inventory control
- Faster processing of new materials
- Track in-library use of materials
- Track materials more accurately
- Reduce costs for processing new materials
- Reduction of overall library staff costs

The largest one-time cost is the initial investment in RFID tags. Hedberg's initial RFID tag investment was nearly \$130,000. This amount purchased 350,000 tags to be applied to their collection and new materials in the first year after they implemented RFID. Tags have since come down in price. Depending on the vendor that is selected and the number of tags needed, it's still likely an initial tag investment would be near \$100,000 for La Crosse.

There is also a sizable initial investment in RFID equipment. RFID workstations and pads for staff cost near \$5,000 or more. New RFID self-check stations can cost \$10,000 or more as can RFID security gates. Lastly, there is the time needed to add RFID tags to the current collection and convert the barcode information to the RFID tag. Tagging and converting a single item can tag 30-60 seconds. Depending whether staff or volunteers do the tagging and conversion, this can be another significant expense. Hedberg reported approximately \$20,000 in staff expenses related to their RFID implementation project.

Additional time commitments beyond installation include training library staff members before final implementation. Also, there will be some staff time involved to help patrons learn how to use RFID self-check stations.

In total, converting to RFID technology at La Crosse, with its three locations, could cost \$200,000 to \$250,000. As an example of potential ROI at this cost, if eight hours per day could be saved at the library aide level, it would take 8-10 years to achieve a return on investment from labor savings. In addition, it's quite possible some equipment would need to be replaced during the first 8-10 years. If that's the case, the ROI timeline could be even longer.

RFID systems offer the ability to perform inventories using hand-held scanners. This allows a library to do an inventory without having to remove items from the shelves as is necessary when doing an inventory on barcoded items. Improved inventory management will improve service, but also has the potential to save money when missing items are found. The amount of savings that could be gained by this is hard to predict and, therefore, cannot be estimated and applied toward determining a potential ROI.

Because La Crosse Public Library is a member of a shared library catalog consortium (WRLSweb), the library won't see all the benefits of implementing RFID because the other libraries do not have RFID tags on their items. Items owned by other libraries sent to La Crosse through delivery to fill La Crosse patron hold requests would require a different circulation process to check out the items. This complicates the circulation process for both staff and patrons. If La Crosse installs RFID security gates, items without RFID tags won't set off the security gates, greatly increasing the risk of loss from theft and negligence (since patrons may check these items out incorrectly or not at all). These complications counteract anticipated benefits of streamlining staff workflows and preventing inventory loss through tag security.

AMH

Automated Materials Handling for libraries consists of two main components: automated check-in and sortation of materials. While AMH can be installed to handle items with barcodes, it is most effective when paired with the implementation of RFID.

The initial purchase and installation expense is dependent on the size of the sortation system, which is determined by the number of sort bins a library chooses to have. It's safe to say a typical installation can range from \$100,000 or more for a three-bin sorter to over \$200,000 for a

sorter with ten or more bins. More bins provide increased presorting of materials for shelving, which improves material processing speed in circulation.

An annual maintenance agreement, which is usually standard with an AMH installation, is typically based on a percentage of the original purchase contract. Hedberg reports their annual maintenance agreement is a little under \$22,000. To absorb this new expense without increasing overall costs, a library would need to save approximately eight hours per day of library aide time. To achieve a financial return on investment, more staff savings would need to be realized.

In order to achieve the maximum potential of AMH, it is important to be able to have all library book returns connected to the sortation system. If some materials, because a book drop is not connected to the sortation system, need to be manually input into the sortation system, the benefit of any potential manual check-in time savings is lost. The La Crosse Main Library has two exterior book drops (including the popular drive-up return) and one multi-slot interior book drop. Due to the physical layout of the Main Library, it is not feasible to connect the two exterior book drops to a sortation system that is also connected to the interior book drop, at least not without extensive construction and conveyance costs.

Recommendation: RFID technology offers the potential for increasing the speed at which materials can be processed in circulation and the reduction of inventory loss, among other possible benefits. If the library wants to consider RFID technology, it is recommended it does a careful assessment to determine whether any actual savings will be achieved to provide a reasonable return on investment. RFID installation requires extensive research and planning to realistically determine any potential gains in library workflow efficiency. As far as an AMH system is concerned, due to its initial expense, the cost of an annual maintenance agreement and the reality that the current building is not conducive to fully realizing a sortation system's full labor-saving potential, it is recommended the library does not consider AMH at the current Main Library.

Collection Management

Selection

The libraries each have 1 to 2 FTE of total staff time dedicated to selection. La Crosse has twenty staff, nineteen of which are outside of the collection management department, involved in selection compared to the other libraries ranging from six to sixteen. While La Crosse has the most staff involved in material selection, the total staff FTE is 1.8, which is the second highest of the libraries.

The libraries indicate that they all have either librarians and/or librarian assistants making material selections. Due to the higher number of professional staff that La Crosse employs, it stands to reason that they have more staff qualified to select materials. It is likely there could be some gain in efficiency by having fewer staff involved in selection, based on the information provided by the other libraries. Though it may not result in a significant reduction in staff time performing selection, it's worth reviewing how many staff are involved in selection.

Acquisitions

Similar to selection, the libraries range from 1 to 2.25 FTE of staff time dedicated to placing orders and purchasing materials. La Crosse's staff FTE is 1.2. Different than selection, this work at all the libraries is handled by staff that are for the most part dedicated to just acquisitions, so the number of staff doing this work ranges from one to three. La Crosse has two staff involved in acquisitions, one dedicated to processing orders and the other spending 20% of her time on acquisitions. The classification of staff doing this work at the libraries in the study include library clerks, library assistants, and librarians.

All but one library makes use of standing orders. Standing orders automate selection and acquisitions to a large degree. What is purchased by the libraries through standing orders is a little different among the libraries. Standing orders should be reviewed at least annually, which La Crosse does. The following information provided by the libraries can be used by La Crosse staff during their annual review for ideas about what materials the other libraries purchase through standing orders.

La Crosse Public Library

- *Adult: purchases a set quantity of every new hardcover offering by over 200 of their most popular fiction authors. They also have nonfiction standing orders on a few core reference materials, test prep books and mainly travel guides.*
- *Youth: they subscribe to some standing orders for youth collections. They have nonfiction (print), award books, easy readers and DVD children's series.*

Hedberg Public Library

- *Adult: some music CDs, some travel and reference books.*
- *Youth: some non-fiction series, some audiobooks.*

L.E. Phillips Memorial Public library

- *Adult: 115 titles from Baker & Taylor; 18 large print plans from Thorndike/Gale.*
- *Youth: 78 series titles of which 16 are YA from Baker & Taylor; other series titles from Cavendish, Gareth Stevens and others.*

Mead Public Library

- *They place standing orders primarily through Baker & Taylor. They are in the process of reviewing and evaluating their standing orders, especially those from non-EDI vendors. The orders are mostly a variety of reference items like tax guides, college guides, stamp catalogs, and some travel guides. However, this is all up for review and they expect to eliminate those with online availability to those resources in most cases.*

Oshkosh Public Library

- *They use Baker & Taylor's Automatically Yours plans for authors for adult and juvenile. Baker & Taylor has created standing orders for them for CDs, children's DVD series, and adult TV series. They use continuations through Ingram and Baker & Taylor for regularly updated editions. They have various plans with Ingram for children's and for graphic novels.*

With only a few exceptions among the libraries, all non-standing orders are placed electronically. The libraries make use of four main vendors for their purchases: Amazon, Baker & Taylor, Ingram and Midwest Tape. All of the libraries use Amazon and Midwest tape to some degree. Between Baker & Taylor and Ingram, four libraries use Baker & Taylor, one uses both and La Crosse works with Ingram.

Recommendation: It is recommended that La Crosse do a price comparison between Ingram and Baker & Taylor. Besides looking at a cost comparison of materials, there should be consideration of which vendor best integrates with the ILS to determine if Ingram should remain the main vendor or if switching to Baker & Taylor should be considered.

Cataloging

The FTE performing cataloging duties at the libraries ranges from 1.5 to 2.75. Though La Crosse has the highest amount of cataloging FTE, it's very close to Oshkosh P.L., whose staff FTE is 2.5. Oshkosh P.L. and La Crosse are the only two libraries in the survey performing cataloging for both their library and other libraries in their public library system. The cataloging positions at the libraries are similarly classified related to the duties performed.

All the libraries edit bibliographic records to different degrees. There is not a significant difference to indicate La Crosse staff are doing anything that requires a major change other than to consistently review, preferably at least once per year, the amount of editing they are doing in different fields to manage that no more is being done than is necessary to maintain quality records for the catalog.

As far as quality control measures of the cataloged records employed by the libraries, for the most part all the libraries use very similar methods. La Crosse indicated, which no other library noted doing, that cataloging records are reviewed and revised by a second person. A discussion with the Collection Manager revealed that this happens infrequently and is only done to review some cataloging for the ILS consortium to ensure an item is described correctly when they do not have the item on hand.

Processing

La Crosse does dedicate almost one more staff FTE to processing materials than the other libraries in the study. The other libraries range from 1 to 1.25 staff FTE dedicated to processing while La Crosse's is 2.2. The library is not doing anything very different during its material

processing as far as what is done to an item (labeling s, jacket covers, etc.). However, based upon site visits and interviews with the Collection Manager, is the extra time is likely due to the current processing path materials take due to a lack of standardized labeling for different material types. The collection manager has been working to improve workflow efficiency since he was hired. He implemented the use of four label templates to streamline the material processing workflow.

Recommendation: The impact to processing efficiency from the change to four label templates has yet to be determined. As additional steps are taken to identify potential improvements to the processing workflow, a review should be done of the number of positions and staff FTE allocated to processing.

Efficiency Improvements

The following are changes the other libraries have made to improve efficiencies in collection management. The La Crosse Public Library collection management department should review these to find examples of steps taken by other libraries that they can adopt to improve their efficiency. Based upon their findings, an action plan should be created to implement any changes that will improve the efficiency of collection management.

Fond du Lac Public Library

- We used to apply a spine label and inside, pocket type label. The inside label was eliminated.
- Instead of stamping material 4+ times, we now only stamp an item once.
- In 2010, we completely reformatted our spine labels to include exactly the information the shelvees needed to correctly shelve the material. Spine labels for fiction books now have author's last name/author's first name/first word of the title/year. (The year was added for patron convenience.)
- Before 2010, a librarian reviewed all new materials to determine on a case by case basis what items would be sent to the new book shelf. That process was eliminated and now all new materials (even new editions of travel and testing books) are sent to the new book shelf for 6-8 months.
- In 2011, we began using our ILS to print spine labels (catalogers had formerly been copy/pasting the call number from the ILS into Microsoft Word and printing from Word).
- In 2012, we changed our music CDs from being organized by Dewey number to genres. Circulation staff assisted in reclassifying and relabeling the collection. Now classifying music CDs takes a fraction of the time it did compared to when we assigned a Dewey number.
- We regularly experiment with different book covers, AV cases, etc. For example, we have been using CoLibri covers for juvenile books and rolled plastic covers for other books, but after a year, we are not as pleased as we had hoped, so now we are returning to rolled covers for juvenile materials and will use the CoLibri for adult nonfiction titles which receive less abuse.
- Just recently (2015), magazine check-in on Surpass software, barcoding/item record creation and labeling moved from circulation pages and clerks to the acquisitions clerk in technical services. She immediately started using spine labels on each issue, rather than hand written labels as had been done in circ. Instant time saver and the labels are more consistent and legible.
- The library has just started an equipment collection. We have a variety of non-standard items (video cameras, arduinos, makey-makeys, screen projector, etc.) which needed to

be processed. We found tackle box organizers and luggage tags extremely helpful. When kits had small pieces, we put pictures of the pieces in the bottom of each compartment so circulation staff can see at a glance what is missing. On awkward pieces of equipment like the screen and bike locks, we used luggage tags to hold the barcode and RFID tag as well as a library business card which lists the hours and contact information. It took a lot of time up front to process these items, but the ease at check-in and checkout was well worth it.

Hedberg Public Library

- Full-time Collection Manager/Technical Services Dept. Head, upon retirement, was replaced by distributing responsibilities among existing staff and assigning oversight of collection as part of responsibilities of new Assistant Director position (2013-2014).
- Established a 21 day maximum turnaround time for copy cataloging and processing (2014)
- Reduced number of regular meetings for Collection Team (from monthly to quarterly) (2014)
- Regularized weeding (2014).
- Added collectionHQ (2014).
- Began to look at streamlining Technical Services processes (2014, 2015).
- Moved from OCLC to SkyRiver (2015).

L.E. Phillips Memorial Public library

- In January 2013, a TS Assistant I was reclassified at a higher level (Assistant II) so that, among other reasons, she would be able to cross-train and perform invoicing and receiving in the absence of the primary person responsible for that task in technical services and so that this person could create order records for items being replaced.

Mead Public Library

- Major changes included writing a collection development policy, which previously did not exist prior to current manager being hired and overhauling the process for selection. This involved having all professional librarian staff take on selection responsibilities (previously, four people were responsible for the entire collection, now nine are), limiting the number of vendors used (EDI only, except in rare circumstances), and having selectors take more "collection maintenance" responsibilities, i.e. weeding, reordering worn/high circulation items, displays, etc.

Oshkosh Public Library

- 2014 – Selection was assigned to one position instead of being spread across 9 selectors. This was done to speed the process.
- 2012 – Worked with Baker & Taylor to create standing orders for CDs and DVDs. These plans are not listed in their regular offerings.
- 2012-2015 – Increased the number of items that are received through automatic orders through the vendors; such as increasing the number of authors listed with Baker & Taylor's Automatically Yours and increasing the number of series received for juvenile paperback series and for graphic novels.

Interlibrary Loan

There is little difference between how the libraries in the study deliver interlibrary loan (ILL) services. All use WISCAT as their primary online resource sharing tool to borrow and lend materials with other libraries in Wisconsin. Because they use the same resource sharing tool, for the most part the libraries make use of the same functions within the software to efficiently perform borrowing and lending functions, including making use of prepopulated fields in material requests and using a custom preferred lenders list to streamline making requests. As a note, the Winnefox Library System performs interlibrary loan services for the Oshkosh Public Library and, because of this, Oshkosh is not included in this ILL services comparison.

Borrowing

There are some slight workflow variations reported by the libraries as far as specific details for both borrowing and lending. The libraries each responded to the following questions regarding their borrowing workflow practices.

1. How is an item updated in OCLC or WISCAT?
2. How is an item marked and tagged to work in ILS?
3. How are patrons notified that an ILL item is available?
4. How does the patron pick up an ILL item?

The following are the responses from the libraries.

La Crosse Public Library

1. *Updating the item in OCLC or WISCAT*
 - a. *OCLC-When an item is received in the library we search OCLC by the request id and updated the record to "received".*
 - b. *WISCAT-When the item is received in the library we scan the barcode on the bookstrap and update to "received".*
2. *Once items are received in WISCAT or in OCLC, bookstraps are then printed to be inserted into each item. If there are multiple requests from the same patron these are grouped together. Once all the slips are by the item, a LPL barcode is attached to each item because our ILS does not like other system barcodes. A short record is created so the item can be attached to the patron's record. The item is then shelved on the hold shelf in the circulation area.*
3. *On the request form there is a section for patrons to be notified. If the form list an email address an email is sent (generated automatically in WISCAT when an item is marked "received" and in OCLC we send out an email). Otherwise we do call the patron if only a telephone number is listed.*
4. *The patron picks up the item at the circulation desk. When we receive the item it we take the steps in checking out the material to the patron right away so this step is not done at the circulation point.*

Fond du Lac Public Library

1. *The interlibrary loan staff person logs into WISCAT and changes request status in Request Manager from Shipped to Received.*
2. *How is it marked and tagged to circulate? Interlibrary loan person creates a short record in Workflows for each item requested before referring and places a hold for the patron.*

This allows the hold to appear in the patron's hold list in their account. A copy is made of every request referred. When item is received, the copy is used to record date received, lender, due date, and barcode, and any paperwork received with the item is attached to it. Paperwork is filed by due date, and is reunited with the item when the patron returns it. Also, the date received, lender, and due date are entered in the item's Workflows record, and item is assigned a barcode. These barcodes are uniquely coded for interlibrary loan use only and are attached to 4" x 4" cards pre-printed with library and interlibrary loan information. The pre-printed card with barcode is attached to the received item and an Avery 6464 Removable ID Label, also pre-printed with interlibrary loan information, is attached to the front cover of item. The patron's name and due date are written on the label, as well as the WISCAT ILL request number. We do not create records in Workflows for microfilm or photocopies but record these in an Excel file.

3. How are patrons notified when an ILL item is available? Because records are created in Workflows, scanning the barcode after it is assigned to the item triggers the hold for the patron in Workflows. Patrons are then notified via the normal Workflows hold notification by either email or phone call.
4. How does the patron check out an ILL item? All out of system interlibrary loan received items are kept behind the Checkout Desk. Patrons must come to the desk to check out item and circulation staff adjusts the due date to what lender has given.

Hedberg Public Library

1. Request is pulled up in AGENT, and is update, by the dropdown menu, to "Received"
2. A barcode is attached to the item and it is given a due date. All paperwork is attached to paper request. Bookstrap with patron's name is attached to the spine with removable tape. A FastAd is created in Millennium, a hold is placed and then the hold is generated. Items are placed on hold shelf behind Checkout Desk.
3. Patron's record has a "Notice Preference." The choices are phone, email or paper. These notices trigger when the hold is generated.
4. ILLs must be checked out at the Checkout Desk, because the due date must be adjusted.

L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library

1. Search request # or title in WISCAT and update to received. Print book strap. The IFLS clearinghouse updates OCLC based on LEPMP update of WISCAT if necessary.
2. Place item in barcoded folder with book strap attached to front. Enter title on item record. Place hold for folder on patron record and check folder in to "trap" hold.
3. Circulation system hold notification, customers receive an email, automated phone call or letter.
4. Item is checked out using the barcode on the folder.

Mead Public Library

1. Checked in/status automatically updates to received
2. Due date & title are hand-written on a due date slip which is taped on to the front of the item
3. WISCAT auto-generated email notice; if no email, staff call the patron

4. *Item is checked out to the customer with appropriate due date prior to receiving the item & contacting the patron. When picked up, patron shows his/her library card and a note is added to the item record to indicate the date the item was picked up.*

Lending

In regards to lending materials, the libraries all batch lending requests to retrieve items from shelves, regularly update their library information in WISCAT, and ensure that any request matches their lending policies. The libraries were also asked the following two questions.

1. What is their lending workflow?
2. How are items packaged and shipped?

The following are the responses from the libraries.

La Crosse Public Library

1. *No requests are completed as they come into the WISCAT or OCLC. Our lending or borrowing items are usually ready a day before the regularly schedule van deliveries are made. At times they are waiting to go out a couple of days because of the van schedule. OCLC items are generally mailed.*
2. *We update the lending request to "shipped" both in WISCAT and OCLC. Then we print out the shipping labels and attach them to the items. The items are sorted for van delivery or mail delivery. For OCLC items we have extra steps in packaging the item and printing out postage through USPS new postage service.*

Fond du Lac Public Library

1. *Requests are processed every day by the interlibrary loan staff person.*
2. *The status of items we are lending are updated to Shipped in WISCAT and we use the Maintain Shipping Labels feature to print out labels. We check the item out to the borrower in Workflows and attach shipping label, or insert the shipping label into the item.*

Hedberg Public Library

1. *Requests are downloaded first thing in the morning, along with email requests. Availability is checked on Millennium and items are pulled from the shelves. Agent is updated to SHIPPED and Shipping Slips are printed. They are folded to show requesting library, taped to item and secured with rubber band. They are then checked out on Millennium, and placed in the delivery bins.*
2. *For requests that come through Agent, we print off a Shipping Slip that has the Borrowing Library's name. We attach it (with removable tape) and rubber band it. For those libraries that are not on Agent, we attach pink delivery slips to items that are routed through the South Central Delivery system. They contain the System name and also the specific library. For out of state items, we use mailing labels.*

L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library

1. *The IFLS clearinghouse places holds on LEPMPL items in the shared catalog. A paging slip that has the borrowing library information and request # is generated for each item. A Desk Clerk prints paging slips, searches for the items and checks them out to the*

borrowing library on the circulation system. The IFLS clearinghouse will update WISCAT or OCLC as necessary.

2. A Desk Clerk fills out delivery slip and prepares for courier or mailing label and packages for mailing.

Mead Public Library

1. Run the pick list; ignore items that are “too new”; pull the item from the shelf; mark as “shipped” in WISCAT; print the WISCAT shipping slip; attach to item; prep for mailing or deposit in a bin designated for pickup by ESLS van; items are picked up by State van service once a week at ESLS System office.
2. For mailing, we use the US mail; put the item in a mailing envelope, weigh it and add metered postage, manually create a mailing label.

The following table is provided for comparison, however, no assessment has been done of the different levels of staff assigned to perform ILL duties. Many of the staff in ILL noted they perform other duties outside of ILL and any attempt by staff to quantify their exact time spent on ILL duties was an estimate. Also, the number of items borrowed and loaned, while certainly signifying the workload an ILL department handles, does not capture all of the time spent handling both filled and unfilled requests.

| Data | La Crosse | Fond du Lac | Hedberg | L.E. Phillips | Mead |
|-----------|-----------|-------------|---------|---------------|-------|
| Staff FTE | 1.00 | 0.63 | 1.50 | 1.50 | 0.50 |
| Borrowed | 2,978 | 2,762 | 3,486 | 2,069 | 3,697 |
| Loaned | 3,193 | 1,099 | 5,628 | 2,665 | 4,750 |

Recommendation: La Crosse ILL staff indicate they spend about forty total hours per week performing ILL services, which is in the middle range of the other four libraries. It is recommended that the La Crosse ILL staff review the workflows of the other libraries to determine if there are any ILL practices they could adopt to improve efficiency. Specifically, La Crosse may want to reach out to Mead Public Library. Mead reported scheduling the least amount of dedicated ILL staff time while borrowing and loaning a high volume of items in comparison to the other libraries.

Closing

In conclusion, through continued exploration of staffing and process management models among peer libraries in the state and beyond, it is possible for the library to find additional cost savings beyond what the library has already achieved in the last few years. To what degree any savings are realized is dependent on providing staff the time to discover and learn from their counterparts at other libraries. The staff will also need the support from the library board and administration to implement new ideas they identify will improve workflow efficiency and services to patrons.

While the library has been identifying savings and making budget reductions for a number of years, like all libraries in this study, the long-term impact of the an underperforming economy and the resulting stress on public service budgets indicates further belt-tightening measures may be necessary. This may be possible through additional savings that may be discovered and realized through finding new efficiencies in the various processes and programs at the library, including building maintenance. However, there are three other main reasons for the difference in overall annual library expenditures between the La Crosse Public Library and the other libraries in this study.

- La Crosse employs more full-time staff and have more staff classified as librarians than their peer libraries.
- La Crosse maintains a quality Archives Department.
- La Crosse has three public library service locations for the residents of La Crosse.

The decision rests with the library board and administration to determine the value placed on La Crosse Public Library's staffing and services as they currently exist compared to other similarly sized libraries in Wisconsin. If the goal is to lessen the overall cost of library services in La Crosse, difficult decisions will likely need to be made. In order to make these decisions it will be important that the library, with input from the community, identify a shared vision for public library services in La Crosse.